

Food allergy or an intolerance?



IT CAN BE HARD TO KNOW WHETHER CERTAIN FOODS ARE CAUSING AN ALLERGIC REACTION, OR IF YOU'VE GOT AN INTOLERANCE. DR ELLIE EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE...

Allergies are an increasingly common problem and, more often than not, it's food that's the culprit. But many people also claim to be *intolerant* of certain foods and, in fact, some food intolerances are becoming faddish and fashionable. So, how can you tell if you're allergic or intolerant to something in your kitchen?

TAKEN TO EXTREMES

A food allergy is like any other allergy: your immune system fights against the food you're allergic to, and reacts very dramatically within minutes or an hour of eating. The most common foods to be allergic to are peanuts, tree nuts – such as almonds, eggs, milk, fish, shellfish, sesame, soy and wheat. Reportedly, two per cent of adults and eight per cent of children in the UK suffer from food allergies.



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

The symptoms of a food allergy can be extreme and life-threatening. Sudden anaphylaxis, where your throat swells, your heart races and it's difficult to breathe, is a medical emergency. People with anaphylaxis may also lose consciousness. Food allergies can cause skin reactions, such as hives, too. Gut symptoms can include vomiting, tummy pain and diarrhoea. Food allergies can also bring about hayfever-like symptoms, such as a runny nose and wheezing.

CHEMICAL REACTION

Unlike a food allergy, a food intolerance is not caused by the immune system. In fact, we don't know why people get intolerances – it's much less clear. Sometimes, the body may lack a specific chemical. In lactose intolerance, people don't have an enzyme called lactase which is needed to digest lactose. In other intolerances, people react to certain chemicals in food or preservatives, such as sulphites.

HOW TO TEST

Doctors are able to organise specialist tests for food allergies. These are either 'skin prick' testing, or blood tests for the specific food involved. However, for

food intolerances, there are no specific tests. If an intolerance is suspected, you need to undertake an 'elimination diet' – this means removing the suspected food from your diet for a period of time to see if symptoms disappear.



READ THE SIGNS

The symptoms of intolerances vary between people and come on much slower than an allergy, within hours or days of eating. Usually, gut or skin symptoms appear, too: bloating, diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or eczema. Intolerances also cause symptoms such as



fatigue, headaches and 'brain fog'. This makes diagnosis quite difficult, as the signs aren't immediate or necessarily obvious.



AVOID COMPLETELY

Treatment of a food allergy must involve avoiding the food, as even the smallest trace of it can bring about symptoms. Sufferers of a severe allergy will carry an EpiPen – a life-saving medical device that treats a severe allergic reaction. Sometimes, people can have a tiny amount of the food they're allergic to if it's cooked – for example, someone could handle cooked egg in a cake, but not a boiled egg.

LEARN TO TOLERATE

Treatment of a food intolerance involves eliminating the food completely for weeks or months. Sufferers can then slowly reintroduce the food in small quantities to a level that they can tolerate before symptoms develop. This level will differ from person to person. For lactose intolerance, some will be able to take a small amount of milk in coffee or a yoghurt, while others cannot tolerate even a splash of milk.

Look younger with Lesley



Anti-ageing guru **Lesley Reynolds** reveals the latest treatments to help you stay youthful

Want to fast-track skin radiance? Meet the new generation of 'super peels' which do more to plump, smooth and restore luminosity than a month's worth of skincare.

THE ALL-ROUNDER

Great for freshening up a tired complexion and smoothing fine lines, glycolic acid works on sensitive skin – plus there's no downtime. Strengths vary, from the salon standard of 20-40 per cent to a clinic version of 70-90 per cent, which must

be performed by a cosmetic doctor or nurse. The acid lifts away dead skin cells and living cells multiply, increasing collagen production and producing hyaluronic acid. You'll need a course of three to six weekly peels, then a top-up every two months. From £70 per treatment.

SMOOTH OUT WRINKLES

A TCA peel (trichloroacetic acid) reduces fine lines and wrinkles by sloughing off the upper layers of the skin. One of the stronger clinical peels, it can feel a little uncomfortable. It's not suitable for sensitive or darker complexions. A course of TCA peels helps to stimulate collagen production and elastin. Expect recovery time for up to two weeks. Three treatments, a month apart, gets the best results. From £300-£1,200 for a peel.



FADE AWAY PIGMENTATION

The VI peel is ideal for treating sun damage and age spots. It's suitable for all skin types and safe to use around the eye area, neck, chest and hands. You get a short, warm and tingly

sensation. Expect some peeling for three to five days, and a brighter, more even skin tone after two weeks. A course of three to four treatments, a month apart, gives the best results. From £250 per peel.

AND DON'T FORGET...

- Different skin types require different peels. Chat to an expert at the clinic beforehand to determine which one would suit your skin type.
- Never apply ingredients that can irritate your skin post-peel, such as retinol. Hyaluronic acid will help rehydrate your skin afterwards, so invest

- in a good moisturiser containing this ingredient.
- Always wear a minimum of SPF30 after treatment, even when it's cloudy, as your skin will be extra-sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light.
- It's important not to clog your pores post-peel, but if you want to use make-up, opt for mineral formulations which won't irritate your skin.

For more information on Lesley and her team of doctors, please visit harleystreetskinclinic.com